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## My (Boring) Exciting Summer



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### Chapter 1 by Fanwizard

"You have to finish packing Meilin!" Mom called from inside just as I was starting my ice cream sandwich. "And you too Meixiu!"

"But can't I at least finish my ice cream first?" I protested, pausing slightly to quickly taking a bite.

The day was hot and humid, like Virginia always was in the summer, but ice cream lowered the temperature at least 600 degrees. Besides, our backyard had a swing that I liked to sit in, letting the cool breeze rock me while I ate my ice cream. My real name is Mary Ann Mirabella Song, but my Chinese name is Meilin. My closest friends call me Mirabella, which is basically their nickname for me. I call them nicknames, and they call me nicknames. Simple as that.

However, only my family relatives (besides my sister) call me Meilin. Unfortunately, my sister's name, Marilyn (Meixiu) has the same initials as me. And that's definitely not something I want to brag about. I call her Meixiu at home, but Marilyn in public. I once called Marilyn, Meixiu in public and she hasn't forgotten, giving me a glare so evil, I can't forget it. She is a master of evil glares.

"We're leaving early tomorrow morning!" Mom shouted back, sounding exasperated. "You've barely started!"

"If you want me to pack so much, why don't you pack for me?" I responded, licking the melting vanilla.

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I sighed, knowing that arguing with Mom was pointless, so I dragged myself inside, and trudged up the stairs, eating the ice cream as fast as I could before it melted into cream soup on my t-shirt. Meixiu's bedroom was right by the top of the staircase, so I peeked in, seeing her on her laptop, completely ignoring the existence of her younger sister. She's so stubborn that she refuses to share a suitcase with me, like I have germs on my clothes that will contaminate her clothes.

"Out," Meixiu ordered as soon as she saw me peeking inside her room, glaring at me. "And go away."

"Fine, fine. I'm out," I muttered, trudging on to Mom and Dad's bedroom. "But shouldn't you start packing?"

"I'll get started when you go away," Meixiu responded, like I was a spy that would send secret information about her t-shirts to the enemy.

I found Mom in her closet, trying to decide what clothes she should pack in the red suitcase. See, we have to share a suitcase, and I insisted I get the exact same amount as her, or she would have to pay a dollar for every extra inch she takes. I've even measured the suitcase. Mom's argued against that logic, saying her clothes were bigger, but I finally won after a day of arguing. So far, I've earned 3 dollars.

"You done yet Meilin?" Mom asked as she neatly folded her bright pink lace dress into the red suitcase.

"Nope," I said, sitting down to stare at the clothes so far that I've packed. Exactly one purple and pink polka dotted t-shirt.

"Then go get started," Mom said as she added a dark blue dress to her neat pile of clothes.

Slowly, I stood up, and dragged myself all the way down the long straight hall to my bedroom. I strided in, dropping down low to open my mahogany bureau to decide what I wanted to bring. I took out a pair of brown capris, and a t-shirt with a brown cow heart. Next I added a pair of tulip capris and a matching t-shirt with tulips on the back of a turtle.

"Why don't you bring that brand new pink dress I bought you?" Mom asked, suddenly appearing in the doorway.

I groaned. I hated that dress. It was itchy, it was pink, and a dress. With bows, and ruffles. I had

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"You can have my pink maxi skirt!" Meixiu suddenly appeared in my doorway, and tossed me her old pink maxi skirt that she had worn exactly twice right before running down the hall back into the safe haven of her room.

"Bring it Meilin," Mom insisted as she removed the hanger from the dreaded dress. "And the maxi skirt."

"Mom-" I tried to protest about how I despised pink skirts and dresses of any types, but Mom cut me off.

"And your hot pink lace skirt," Mom added as she opened the bottom left drawer and pulled out (gasp!) a hot pink lace skirt. "You're growing so fast honey, and I want you to wear it while you can."

As I said earlier, arguing with Mom is pointless. Mom opened my closet door again and removed my watermelon dress, Dad's favorite.

"It's summer," Mom explained as she once again removed the hanger and folded it neatly.

"Summer only happens once each year."

I tried to add my cream white lace skirt to the pile, but Mom shook her head. "Wear them tomorrow, when we fly."

After I argued with Mom about what I should and shouldn't bring, Mom finally took my pile of clothes away to add to the red suitcase. Now, to pack my carry on bag. I opened my closet once again and removed my empty galaxy print backpack, trying to decide what to add. Mom only allowed one backpack for each of us to carry on the plane, and I had to be able to carry it without Mom or Dad having to do it for us.

First, chocolate and candy. I added 14 Kit Kats, a king sized Hershey bar, 17 Airheads, 6 packs of Junior Mints, 7 Snickers, 4 packs of gum, (pineapple, strawberry, starburst, and Sour Patch Kids) and 7 Reese's Cups. This was supposed to last me 2 whole weeks, and I might have to share them with Meixiu. Second, entertainment. I tossed in a pencil pouch, filled with pencils, erasers, pens, a pencil sharpener, and a brand new sketchbook. After a few minutes of debating, I decided I would bring Starry River of the Sky, and Dumpling Days, two of my absolute favorite books. Then I tossed in the Fault in Our Stars, my absolute favorite book. Next, I added a completely blank midnight blue notebook, in case I desperately needed to write on paper. Fifth,

I added my travel journal which I filled with my scratchboard. Sixth, I added a brand new travel kit.

Also, Mrs. Gowen emailed us we were going to have a contest about our summer vacation and it would be due the first day of school. I had to write at least 2 pages, with correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. I added a brand new pack of tissues, because I always seemed to have a sniffles and a silver umbrella in case it rained. Fourth, I added band aids in case I trip and fall, scraping my knee. (Which is about everyday)

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Fifth, I added my favorite and softest white jacket, with thumb holes, in case the weather was cold. Finally, I added my sky blue waterbottle, which I was sure to fill with water and 200 Renminbi, the Chinese name for money.

I zipped it tight, and opened my laptop lid. I wanted to email my friends that I was going to be in China, and I was sorry that I couldn't email them back because China hardly ever had wifi but that I would be back by July 4th, but should send me emails etc. Once I was done, I went on to [www.garfield.com](http://www.garfield.com) to look at the Garfield comics one more time before two weeks without reading them. Tomorrow was Garfield's birthday, yet I wouldn't get to see him until after his birthday. I would have a lot of catching up to do. Next, I went to [www.gocomics.com/bignate](http://www.gocomics.com/bignate), because I loved reading Big Nate comics. I hadn't read one in a while, and I wanted to catch up right before I left.

Once I got bored of that, I peeked into Meixiu's room again. This time, she was opening her dresser drawers, and removing her Academy at Lincoln t-shirt, neatly folding it, then unzipping her backpack to place it inside. Her backpack's so big, it doubles as her suitcase and entertainment bag.

"Go away," Meixiu ordered, glaring at me briefly before continuing to stare at her computer screen.

"But your sweet little sister is here for a visit," I tried to look innocent and sweet, batting my eyelashes at her. As a little sister, it was my job and responsibility to annoy her every minute.

"Go away or I'll kick you so hard, you'll land in next week," Meixiu responded, giving me a glare so evil her previous glare seemed like a laugh.

I walk back to Mom's room, entering the closet as she was trying to decide which scarves she should bring. (Seriously? It's summer.) The clothes I had selected were already in there, neatly stacked beside Mom's clothes.

"Finished packing your carry on bag?" Mom asked, as she added a teal blue scarf into the suitcase.

"Uh-huh," I replied, plopping down and beginning to fiddling with the teal blue scarf. "I'm bored. What do I do?"

"Clean your room," Mom said, raising her eyebrows at me. "And make your bed while you're at it."

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I groaned. "Mom, I just cleaned it last week. I hate cleaning it. You know that. Just because I shower in it doesn't mean I bring in all this dirt and mud inside."

Okay, maybe that was a lie. I did like rolling down hills, and did tend to get a lot of mud and grass blades stuck to my skin when I come in. But I'm not that dirty.

"Fine, fine," Mom said, locking her eyes with me. "Then, double check that your carry on bag has everything."

I was desperate, so that I went to my room and double checked. Everything was there, ready to go. As I lay on my stomach, my eyes drifted to the bright green book Ms. Fitz had printed and bound for me. I hadn't liked the way it turned out, because I hadn't chosen a good title and the chapters were either in the middle of a page instead of the top or was at the very bottom.

I had named it Fate and the Necklace, and I hated the font, because it looked so ugh. Slowly, I got an idea. I turned on my laptop, and signed into my Google Account. Then I began editing Fate and the Necklace. First, I changed the title, and chapter fonts to Alex Branch. Then, I made the font size 12 instead of 11. It might not have made such a difference, but I thought it looked better. Next, I made the line spacing single instead of 1.15, and after a lot of consideration, I changed the book title from Fate and the Necklace to Carlotta. After I read the whole book again, I changed Amanda's name to Ashley. I liked Ashley much better than Amanda.

Once I was done, I logged out, and went back to staring into space. I couldn't do much else. There was no interesting shows to watch on TV for a while, and I wasn't in the mood for games. (Insert loud gasp of horror.) So I just twiddled with my thumbs for a while, staring at my chipped nails, and deciding to fix them because I had absolutely nothing else to do. I got up, and opened the nail polish box that Mom had given me for my ninth birthday right before she drove to Virginia, (long story) and twisted open the nail polish bottle.

After I was done, I sat there, unable to do anything without completely smearing it. So I did the thing that came naturally, annoying Meixiu. I walked very slowly down the hallway, and peeked into Meixiu's room, searching for my sister. She wasn't there, but I noticed the door to her bathroom was closed. I crept in very quietly, and crouched on the other side of her bed, the part farthest away from the bathroom door. Soon, I heard the toilet flush, and the sink turn on. After exactly a minute of the sinking running, it stopped, and out strolled Meixiu, looking confident

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"What the heck are you doing in my room?" Meixiu demanded. "Didn't I tell you to get out or else?"

"Yep," I smiled at her. "I didn't listen. The last time you tried to get me in trouble you got grounded for a month."

"MOM! MEILIN'S BEING A BRAT!" Meixiu hollered at the top of her lungs, scowling at me. Mom came running, and as soon as she saw Meixiu glaring at me, me laying on her bed, Mom crossed her arms.

"Meilin, why aren't you packing? And didn't I tell you not to disturb your sister? Your sister deserves her privacy." Mom scolded me. "Meixiu, are you done packing? We're leaving tomorrow."

"I was packing," Meixiu narrowed her eyes and gave me a glare so evil, I flinched. "Until a certain brat scared the daylights out of me."

"Meilin," Mom gave me the special "mom look." "Don't disturb your sister. Do anything you want besides invite your friends over, annoy your sister, eat too many sweets, and do anything inappropriate."

So I walked out of the room, descended down the wooden stairs, and headed outside to sit on the swing. The temperature had lowered at least twenty degrees, so it was pleasantly cool, not too hot or too cold. I pressed my finger on my nails, and discovered they were dry and smooth. I didn't have anything to do, so I just sat there, my feet dangling as the breeze rocked me back and forth. Around 5 o'clock, Dad came home, we ate dinner of fried rice, and started loading the car.

After dinner, I sat on the recliner, reading the Fault in Our Stars for the millionth time. Meixiu went back to her room to say goodbye to her laptop, friends, and internet. Mom washed the laundry one last time, and I hung it up in the hallway. Dad climbed the stairs as I was hanging up Meixiu's black t-shirt.

"Hey sport," Dad said as he reached the top of the stairs. "I got you a pack of gummies today from work."

Dad attends these meetings that I'm pretty sure people only attend because they get free meals and cookies. Like Dad, they only pretend to listen and be fascinated about whatever

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So I took out my bamboo mat, my blanket, my pillow, laid them out in the office, (because my room was too hot even with air conditioning) and changed into my sleeping pajamas. But I couldn't sleep. I was too restless, imagining my family relatives. I had never met my mom's youngest sister, nor had I met my dad's youngest brother. Slowly, I drifted off into a dreamless, restless sleep, my mind wandering around memories I didn't want to remember.

## Chapter 2 by Fanwizard



Thursday, June 19th

Virginia

"Yes, my name is Peter Song," I heard Dad say on the phone. "I'm headed for Newark today. What do you mean I have to change flights?"

Groggily, I looked up, and saw the family room lamp was on. I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes, trying to remember what time and day it was.

"Happy birthday Garfield," I mumbled as I kicked off the soft red blanket and stood up.

Change clothes, Mom mouthed to me as soon as she saw me. Mom and Dad were already dressed, and Mom was sitting beside Dad as he talked on the phone. And wake up Meixiu for me.

I sleepily climbed the stairs, and opened Meixiu's bedroom door. (She keeps it closed during the night.) The fan was on, as Meixiu was peacefully sleeping on her bed, far from the grumpy, bossy sister I knew. She would have normally killed me if I woke her up, especially at 3 o'clock in the morning.

"Meixiu," I turned off the fan, climbed onto her bed, and shook her gently. "Wake up. We're going to-

"CHINA!" Meixiu sat up straight in bed, startling me. Then she noticed me standing in her room.

"What are you doing in my room?"

"You weren't asleep?" I asked, puzzled by how fast Meixiu got up. Normally, she would mutter about how annoying I was, and about five more minutes of sleep.

Even in the pitch darkness, I could see Meixiu roll her eyes at me, doing the famous my-little-sister-is-an-idiot eye roll.

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At last, I strolled out of the room, saying bye to my room, my laptop, and my stuffed animals. (Don't judge.) Before I headed down the stairs, I saw the gummies Dad had given me the night before, and picked them up.

Meixiu's door swung open, and out she stepped, wearing a pair of jean capris, a grey t-shirt, and her favorite blue jacket. I am not trying to be mean, but her hair looked crazy. It was all puffy, and part of her hair was puffy and curly, refusing to stay straight, while the other part was straight and normal. It's normally like that, and I've gotten used to it, but if you ever saw her, you would flinch at her hair.

"What are you staring at?" Meixiu demanded as she ran her fingers through her thick black hair. "Uh, nothing," I descended down the stairs before she could press harder for details about what was "nothing."

Mom and Dad were both loading the car, making sure we had enough money, water, clothes, and food. Dad wouldn't be on the same flight as us for the whole trip, but we would meet up with him in Shanghai.

Running up the stairs one last time, I slung my carry on bag on, and headed back down the stairs. I slipped the gummy bears into the bag.

Once I was ready with my sneakers securely tied, I headed into the garage, stepped outside into the darkness, and stared a while at the stars. The night was a bit chilly in my t-shirt and skirt, but the sky was a blue, not quite black, but not exactly blue.

I made sure the memory stayed in my mind, and how quiet and still the world could be in one part of the world while Ebola became stronger, killing more people every second and ISIS killed more people, gaining power and strength in other parts of the world. It was beautiful and strange that way. The same way a car crash was.

Eventually, I opened the car door, climbed into the car, and opened my bag, unwrapping a watermelon flavored airhead. I was starving. Mom climbed into the passenger seat, and turned around, handing me a large plastic black container.

"Your breakfast," Mom explained as she turned back around and opened a black container for herself.

I opened the container, and discovered it had a pancake and egg sandwich, sausages, toast

It had peanut butter and a cookie roll. The best part was they were still warm. Yum. When Meixiu finally climbed into the car, I opened the container while I was scarfing down the food as fast as I could.

At last, Dad came out, and we drove away. The world became smaller and smaller as we drove away.

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"China! Here we come!" Mom said excitedly as we turned right. "Are you excited? It's your first time!"

"Yeah Mom," Meixiu muttered. "Of course I am. I've already been to China once, when I was a few months old."

Being a pre-teen, Meixiu isn't very enthusiasm about much, and the one thing she really was excited about was that we were going to Universal Studios in December for a week.

"I am," I piped up, trying to ignore Meixiu's dagger glare. "I can't wait to go meet all the family relatives."

I could have imagined it, but I could have sworn Dad's eyes became sadder as his body sagged.

"Maybe," Dad said as he turned left again. "You'll even meet ones that aren't with us anymore."

Now I knew for certain he was talking about his mom. I don't know much about her, mainly because she died the year before I was born, and all I know about her is a) she died when she was only 50 from high blood pressure, and b) she looked just like me. I had only seen 3 pictures of her, but I can't see my face in hers.

Mom and Dad won't tell me her name, because they're too sad over her death, (or I haven't asked) and I didn't dare ask.

The rest of the ride was silent, until I pulled out the pack of gummy bears, and opened it. Meixiu gave me her big brown hopeful eyes, and I split it four ways, being the nice person I am.

"Hey Mom," I said, breaking the silence. I was tempted to start singing, I broke the silence!

"Want some gummy bears?"

"No thanks, sweet pea," Mom said without taking her eyes off the road. Mom doesn't like sweets that much, except ice cream, but it can't be too sweet.

"How 'bout you Dad?" I asked as I started chewing a green gummy bear. Meixiu popped a white one into her mouth, and started chewing.

"Nope. Thanks for offering though honey. How about you and Meixiu share the gummy bears yourself?"

So we did. I split Mom and Dad's share for both Meixiu and me, and we chewed in the still silence.

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